

The Eads Bridge:

N1: Narrator 1

N2: Narrator 2

N3: Special guest voice of Walt Whitman-one line

N1: This tour begins along the walk closest to the river, midway between the Gateway Arch Parking Garage and the north leg of the Gateway Arch on the east sidewalk. Face the river. Ahead, you see the trees and then the muddy brown of the Mississippi River. Now look north, to your left and you see the Eads Bridge, a miracle of engineering when it was completed in 1874. Since then the bridge has been admired not only for the technical skills needed to build it, but also for its beauty.

In 1892 Walt Whitman, the great American poet wrote,

N3: "I have haunted the river every night lately, where I could get a look at the bridge by moonlight. It is indeed a structure of perfection and beauty unsurpassable, and I never tire of it."

**N2:** The Eads Bridge was designed by a man with little schooling who had never built a bridge before. Yet 130 years later it still stands as strong as ever. This is a testament to a man of whom it can be said, "he knew the river."

N1: James B. Eads was born in Lawrenceburg, Indiana in 1820. His father lost a great deal of money in bad investments, so he had very few years of formal schooling. In 1833 he arrived in St. Louis, a penniless 13-year-old boy forced to peddle apples on the street for money. He soon obtained a position as a clerk with Barrett Williams, who let the boy read books in his private library. Eads later worked as a clerk on a Mississippi steamboat and while daydreaming invented a new type of diving bell for salvage work.

N2: In 1842 Eads formed a partnership with boat builders Case & Nelson and specialized in recovering wrecked boats and lost cargoes. Eads' patented diving bell made his company the most successful on the river. Eads retired in 1857 due to ill-health.

N1: When the Civil War began in 1861, Eads offered his services as an engineer to the government and was awarded a contract to build seven ironclad steamboats. The catch was that the boats had to be ready for their crews with guns in place within 65 days. The first boat was finished in 45 days, and all seven were finished on time. The government was so slow in paying Eads that the boats were built with his own money, and were still technically his personal property when they fought at Fort Donelson in 1862 and Vicksburg in 1863.

N2: With these ironclads Eads created a unique little navy suited to the inland waterways. He built fourteen more armored gunboats, seven converted transports called "tin clads," and four heavy mortar boats. The Eads ironclads first fought at Fort Henry in February 1862, a month before the *Monitor* fought the *Merrimac* in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

N1: Eads' greatest and most lasting contribution to St. Louis was this bridge constructed to his design and finished in 1874. This was the world's first arched steel truss bridge. The bridge had to have a 300 foot center span and fifty feet of clearance above the water for the largest steamboats of the day and prominent engineers said it couldn't be done.

N2: In 1867 men began digging out sand and gravel to reach bedrock. They worked inside "caissons" devices like a giant inverted bowls filled with air which were sunk below the surface of the river. Because the men were working over 90 feet beneath the river, bridge builders began to suffer "the bends" or 'decompression sickness' This was a new disease to the medicine of the time, and because there was no known treatment, 16 workers died. Working days were cut to two 45 minute shifts to prevent further deaths.

N1: Eads fought Pittsburgh millionaire Andrew Carnegie for the type of steel he needed, and traveled to London to get financing. The piers were anchored to the bedrock by 1872, and the construction of the steel superstructure began. A total of 4.7 million pounds of steel and 6.3 million pounds of wrought iron were used in the structure. On July 2, 1874, Eads ran 14 large locomotives out onto the 520' long bridge to test its strength. The bridge was actually stronger than was required. It was supposed to hold 3,000 pounds per linear foot, but to this day can carry 5,000.

N2: On July 4, 1874, with 150,000 people looking on, Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman drove the last spike, completing Eads Bridge. The bridge was dedicated with marching bands and an enormous fireworks display. The total cost was \$6.5 million.

N1: Eads continued to work on engineering projects after the completion of his famous bridge. He was instrumental in building the first permanent mouth of the Mississippi into the Gulf of Mexico, using a system of jetties. He completed this massive task in only four years, by 1879. Eads died in 1887 while visiting the Bahamas in the hopes of regaining his health. His bridge became the symbol of a new, dynamic St. Louis. It also became the symbol of the end of the steamboat era.

N2: Please proceed to the next stop, the Historic Old Courthouse. Follow the path towards the Arch leg, then proceed towards the west, where the city and the courthouse lie.

### The Old Courthouse

N1: As you stand on the Arch grounds looking west towards the city, the Historic Old Courthouse stands amid the modern skyline of modern St. Louis, a reminder of the past in the middle of the present. This building served as the civic headquarters for St. Louis for over 100 years. Although the courthouse was important throughout its history, it was never more so than in the period directly after the Civil War.

N2: In its time, the Courthouse held various offices, such as the city assessor's office, the license collector, the probate division of the courts, not to mention the courts themselves.

Shortly before the war, Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, received his riverboat pilot's license here.

N1: The building was under construction until 1862. The courts continued, despite the constant changes occurring outside the building. During the Civil War, martial law was imposed upon the city and it affected all.

N2: In late 1864, the elections in Missouri showed people wanted a change. The Radical Reconstructionists became very powerful in the Missouri House and Senate. Although the governor had proposed a gradual end to slavery, replacing it with indentured service, the Radical Reconstructionists demanded immediate change.

N1: The Radicals, as they came to be called, called for a convention in St. Louis in January 1865. The convention was held five blocks north of the Courthouse at the Mercantile Library Hall. After five days of deliberation, on January 11, 1865, delegates voted to abolish slavery in Missouri effective immediately. They also ratified the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution.

N2: These changes were immediate. Those at the Courthouse now had to deal with a new political freedom and a changed city. After the War in St. Louis, the politically charged atmosphere did not dissipate immediately. As with many places, this river city had a diverse community which viewed the events of the last four years with changing attitudes. The Radicals pushed for a loyalty oath, sometimes called the Ironclad Oath.

N1: The oath assured loyalty to the Union Cause and weeded out any citizens who had given aid or comfort to the enemy, or even had pro-secessionist attitudes. Politicians, professional men, and government workers were required to sign the oath. Clergymen were prevented from preaching without taking the oath. Many considered it an illegal infringement on personal liberty, but could do nothing to stop it.

N2: Two weeks after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in Washington, an Ouster Ordinance was passed, stating that those who did not pledge their loyalty were suspended from their positions. This affected all levels of government, especially at the courthouse.

N1: Many cases were heard regarding the oaths. People in St. Louis who did not agree with the terms were tried and even appointees of the governor who enacted the measure did not necessarily uphold the decisions. The state militia became involved. One morning, the militia arrived at the Courthouse to enforce the Loyalty Oath. When the justices of the Missouri Supreme Court refused to sign, they were replaced with others who were more agreeable to the governor.

N2: In 1869, four years after the end of the war, the oath was repealed as a more moderate party emerged. However, the idea of universal suffrage, as proposed by some of the reconstructionists, fell out of popularity, as did the party.

N1: In 1872, Virginia Minor and her husband Francis brought suit for women's suffrage. Again, this case went to the Supreme Court of the United States, using similar arguments as the Dred Scott case regarding Civil Rights. A similar verdict was reached: the plaintiff (Minor) lost her case. While this did not lead to another Civil War, the case did become a rallying cry for the women of the country in obtaining the right to vote.

N2: Please proceed to the Barnum's Hotel, our next stop. From here, it is just about directly across the lawn as you head south. That's the quickest route. Or, follow the path you are now on west, towards the city, until you reach the sidewalk along Memorial Drive. Turn left onto the sidewalk and walk south towards the Cathedral, then, turn left at the next walkway heading east toward the river. The second light post is your destination. Look for the It Happened Here label and the Barnums' Hotel title. Please pause your player until you arrive.

### Barnum's Hotel

N1: One memorable facet of life in St. Louis was the many and opulent hotels that existed in the riverfront district for the use of businessmen passing through the town. In 1854 Barnum's Hotel, one of the most spectacular hotels of the day, opened to the east of the Cathedral, near where you are standing.

N2: Barnum's Hotel was erected in 1854 by George R. Taylor, and operated by Mssrs. Barnum and Fogg. A building six stories tall was at that time pretty remarkable, and

Barnum's was one of the first tall buildings in St. Louis. Due to its plush, comfortable rooms and public spaces, Barnum's had a reputation for serving wealthy and important visitors to St. Louis. When the Prince of Wales, (later King Edward VII of Great Britain) visited St. Louis in 1860, he stayed at Barnum's. Dred Scott once worked as a porter in the hotel and became an attraction for visitors, who asked him about his famous court case.

N1: The Barnum Hotel, like most of the large hotels of the era, had a large barber emporium run by free African Americans. F. and W. Robersons' Shaving Saloon was located in Barnum's. The persons of color who ran the city's barber emporiums made a good living at their trade. Cyprian Clamorgan was an African American who wrote of the wealthy free black community in a book called *The Colored Aristocracy of St. Louis*, published in 1858. He related that "A mulatto takes to razors and soap as naturally as a young duck to a pool of water, or a strapped Frenchman to dancing; they certainly make the best barbers in the world, and were doubtless intended by nature for the art."

N2: Barnum's Hotel was only one of many in St. Louis. In December of 1865, another such hotel opened nearby: the Southern Hotel. While Barnum's Hotel had been central to the city people before the Civil War, the Southern Hotel was meant to greet those visiting the reborn post-war city. The building's size reflected St. Louis' ambitions as it emerged after the disruption in trade and travel caused by the conflict.

N1: The Southern Hotel, at Fourth and Walnut streets, to the west of where you are standing, had a large ballroom and more floors than the Barnum. The hotel had a grand



central atrium that rose from the first floor to the top of the seventh. The grand opening of the Southern Hotel was attended by nearly all the major society and business persons of the city. Returning war veterans and their wives, strong unionists, and the presidents of companies with military contracts during the war celebrated in the Grand Ballroom. The hotel was greatly applauded for its beauty and hospitality.

N2: On April 12, 1877, a great fire once again struck in St. Louis, but this time it took place at the Southern Hotel. It was early in the morning, approximately 1:45 AM, when the St. Louis Fire Department warning bells signaled the fire. A later investigation revealed that the fire started in the servant's quarters, on the lowest levels of the building. By the time the fire department arrived, there was not much hope for the building. The beautiful seven-story tall atrium served as a chimney for the fire, carrying the flames quickly to the floors above and trapping people in their rooms. The hotel and its gilded trappings the furnishings all helped to fuel the flames. By the time that many guests awakened, the exits and stairs were already blocked by flames.

N1: The timing of the fire meant that people coming to work in the morning saw the fire department in full action. Many spectators took in the heroic and horrific events occurring before their eyes. Many persons trapped inside the building pleaded for help from upper-story windows and balconies. Firemen began rescuing as many as they could, but the sheer number of people in the hotel became problematic.

N2: A reporter watched a woman jump from the 7<sup>th</sup> story in desperation, falling to her death below. A man atop the highest floor screamed for help as the flames moved closer. He moved to his window ledge, and firemen placed ladders to reach the man. Phelim O'Toole, a fireman who had also worked at sea, began the climb, but the ladders would not reach to the top story. As the window started to give way, O'Toole saved the man by climbing atop the highest rung of the ladder and having the man slide onto his shoulders. Slowly, O'Toole and the man climbed down to the cheers of the crowd. O'Toole became, for the remainder of his life, a local hero and celebrity.

N1: Please move to your next stop, a view of the Levee, to learn more about that story. To get there, walk east, going either under or around the Arch, to the top of the Grand Staircase that takes you down to the riverfront. When there, remain at the top of the stairs. Please pause your player and resume when you arrive at a point with a view of the Mississippi River and the riverfront.

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The Levee

N1: Narrator 1

N2: Narrator 2

N1: Place yourself at the top of the stairs overlooking the Levee. During the Civil War, barge and steamboat traffic slowed to a trickle. Compared to earlier years, the levee seemed a ghost of its former self. Wharves stood empty; horse carts and

porters awaited the occasional boatload of passengers and cargo. The river passed, as did time, through a once-thriving harbor interrupted by war.

N2: Located between the Missouri and Ohio Rivers, St. Louis served as a transportation hub for business and travel. By way of New Orleans, St. Louis also served as a port for imports to and exports from eastern states and Europe. Merchandise was shipped from eastern manufacturing centers, agricultural commodities were exported back east and natural resources passed through to foreign markets. Traveling back and forth with people and their business was news and information about family members, friends, business associates and developments. As the main route of transportation into and away from the city, the Mississippi River became a strategic pawn in the Civil War.

N1: In 1861, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation of blockade against southern ports. While Missouri did not succeed from the Union, the blockade stopped trade with states to the south, as well as shipping through the port at New Orleans.

N2: As a result, much of the trade channeled through St. Louis shifted north to Chicago. The final blow came with the declaration of martial law in St. Louis, to quiet threats from southern sympathizers in the city. The shift not only deprived St. Louis of economic development, but it allowed Chicago to develop more infrastructure, particularly railroads, which eventually began to replace steamboats as the preferred method of transportation.

N1: After the Civil War, traffic on the Mississippi River resumed. The levee was extended in 1868 in anticipation of increased traffic. St. Louis captured most of

the trade lost during the war, but with reconstruction in the south, southern ports began to compete for business as well. Railways also proved a more popular way to ship people and goods. The transcontinental railway established a route north of St. Louis, but the city eventually served as the terminus for a number of rail lines traveling west. With the completion of Eads Bridge in 1874, river traffic once again slowed, never to recapture the former glory of its heyday.

N2: Thank you for joining us for this episode of *It Happened Here*. We look forward to sharing more information about the National Park Service area, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.